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Geo. Clark.

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S P E E C H
OF
GEORGE THOMPSON,

MEMBER OF THE

BRITISH HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT,

AT TORONTO, MAY 1851.

CINCINNATI:

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1851.

S P E E C H
OF
GEORGE THOMPSON, M. P.

CITIZENS OF TORONTO,

The advertisements which have convened this meeting, have already informed you that I appear in this hall to-night to deliver a lecture on the Evils of Slavery. I do so on the invitation of the Anti-Slavery Society, of Canada. I rejoice over the formation of that body, and that its head-quarters are to be in this beautiful, improving and important city. It was called into existence, as I learn from its constitution, to cry aloud to your neighbors beyond the line, to stay their hands from prosecuting a system of iniquity, and to invite and urge them, by every consideration arising from our common Christianity, to put a stop to it for ever by the abolition of slavery. I am glad to find that this duty is to be performed in the spirit of those who entertain the feelings of brethren and friends toward the inhabitants of the neighboring States, and that you disclaim any desire to intermeddle officiously with the internal affairs of that great, growing, and mighty people, from whom you are separated by so short a distance. The work you have purposed to yourselves is worthy of you, and the spirit in which you propose to prosecute it is worthy of you, and of those with whom you purpose to co-operate, as of those, also, to whom your Christian remonstrances and brotherly rebukes will be directed. I am rejoiced to find, also, that you heartily bid God-speed to the noble and ever-increasing band of Christians and patriots in the United States, who publicly plead, without fear

or favor, the cause of their enslaved fellow-citizens. In this you do well. The true abolitionists of the United States are eminently worthy of your admiration, your encouragement and God-speed. The world does not contain a nobler band of men and women. In proportion as you learn to know them, you will learn to love them, and to regard them as that part of the great American Union who are doing most for the diffusion of those divine principles which lay at the foundation of the great doctrine of the universal brotherhood of man, and of the equal regard of our common Parent for all the children of the human family.

As a British subject, I feel peculiarly happy in being with you on this occasion. I am increasingly happy to find myself upon the same platform in the new world with those who have been my fellow-laborers in the cause of emancipation in the old world; to find them still alive, active and vigorous in the cause in which we labored and triumphed on the shores of our native country; to find, too, that they have faith in the power and universality of the truths which were successfully applied to our own Colonial system of bondage. This is as it should be. We won the victory over West Indian bondage, not because we were Britons, but because the truths we preached were divine, universal and eternal. This is no question of latitude and longitude—it is a human question. I ask not, Is the slave my fellow-subject? but, Is he a man? I ask not, Do I stand upon British or American soil? but, Am I still in God's dominions? Am I still under the law of the Supreme Ruler, and are the great principles of morality and justice still the same? If my brother is held in unjust bondage, my message is the same, whether it be to my own or any other human government. Thus saith the Lord, 'Break every yoke, and let the oppressed go free.'

I have come amongst you to discuss the question on no low or narrow grounds. In my mind, it links itself indissolubly with every topic within the entire range of religion and human duty. It ascends to the very being of God, and has to do with His character, His attributes, and His moral government of the

world. It entwines itself around the spiritual nature, hopes, fears, joys, sorrows, the present condition and future destinies of man. It must be understood before we can comprehend man's responsibilities, or know the meaning of the command, 'I am the Lord thy God, and thou shalt have no other God before me.' This question cannot be separated from the doctrine of a future and equal judgment, and of a just and unerring retribution. It cannot be disjoined from the capacity, improvable-ness and immortality of the soul. It concerns the all-important questions of the inspiration, authority and interpretation of Scripture. It defines the limit of human statutes, and settles the question of the paramount claims and obligations of the law of individual conscience and of God. It must be studied if we would know who is our neighbor, and what is our duty towards him, or to what extent we are authorized in applying the principles of the everlasting gospel and the truths of revelation to the affairs of the world. As far as I have been connected with the great question of slavery, it has not been with me a question of politics. It is transcendently, it is infinitely above all human politics. If there be a principle at the bottom of this question—in other words, if there be any truth in the doctrine that there is a God—that he is the Creator and Governor of the world—that he is the sole proprietor of man, and that man belongs of right to himself, and is responsible only to the Supreme Ruler for his actions—then slavery is not an institution to be regulated, but a *crime* to be abolished—not a condition to be modified, but a wrong to be redressed; then religion and morality demand that the evil doer return to the allegiance he owes to God, and the slave be instantly restored to his rights as a man. This whole subject resolves itself into the question, 'Can man hold property in man?' If this question be answered in the affirmative, then we have no ground to stand upon; then we are impertinent intermeddlers, whether we speak against slavery on English, Canadian, or American soil. But if it be answered in the negative, then our feet are placed upon a rock, and our commission is, 'Go ye into all the world, and wherever ye find the Divine Creator and sole proprietor of man

dethroned by the usurpation of his prerogative, denounce the daring impiety, and demand that God be restored to his rightful dominion, by the restoration of liberty to that subject of His government who is now held in chattel bondage.' Grant that man may hold property in man, and you are a trespasser on the plantation, and an invader of legitimate rights. Deny the infernal doctrine, and you are a true and loyal subject of the King of kings—the vindicator of His outraged rights—the restorer of His children—the upholder of His government—ay, and the saviour of the slaveholder himself. Go forth in the strong belief that man cannot have property in man, and you are at once a co-worker with God. You are at once in harmony with universal truth—your doctrine finds an echo in every human heart—the consciences of all men are on your side—you have at once enlisted the affections, agonies, exultations, and hopes of humanity on your side. Can man hold property in man? Can man become a God on the one hand? can man become a beast on the other? Can the master be man and God in the same person? Or can the slave be man and beast in the same person? Can a creature own an equal fellow-creature? Can the potsherd say unto the potsherd: "Thou art mine?" Can the sinner be God over his fellows? Or can another man, formed like him, be at once free to serve God, and doomed to serve a man? Be a rational, immortal, and accountable soul, in his relation to God—a marketable, degraded beast, who may be manacled, scourged, branded, hunted, and shot like a wild animal, in his relation to man? Has the master a soul? So has the slave. Is the master responsible? So is the slave. Has the master affections? So has the slave. Does the master hope, fear, rejoice? So does the slave. Must the master be free, that he may fulfil the purposes for which he was born, and glorify God in the use of his faculties? So equally must the man he calls his property. Would the master, if he were made a slave, regard his doom as worse than death, and lose the crown of glory from his brow? It is even so with the slave. Away for ever, then, with the doctrine that has filled the world with woe, that man, whose breath is in his nostrils, can have property in his fellow-man!

If these views be admitted to be correct, with what feelings must that system be regarded which makes merchandize of three millions of the human race, or one hundred and twenty times as many as the entire population of the city of Toronto: a system, too, which entails slavery upon the posterity of these three millions to the very latest generation. Yet, such is the system which at this moment sheds its baleful influence over every part of the great Republic to which you are so near neighbors. Three millions of imbruted men, women, and children, the chattels of 20,000 tyrannical and sordid men—the disgrace as they are, the curse of their species. A money-making confederation, to which the stock is in human hearts and human souls. While other men call themselves rich in flocks and herds, and fields and farms, these men count their riches according to the number of souls that tremble at their glance, and the capacity of their human cattle to increase and multiply. They rear children as they would rear sheep or calves; they put beauty, and loveliness, and youth, and purity, and intelligence, and piety, up at auction, and sell them to the highest bidder. They sell their own children without remorse, and are filling the shambles of America with the best blood of Virginia and the Carolinas. O, what a monster is man! Not satisfied with the legitimate dominion given him by his Creator over the beasts of the field, the fowls of the air, and the fish of the sea—not satisfied with every tree of the garden, with every green herb for meat, and the cattle upon a thousand hills—not satisfied with the promise that “summer and winter, seed time and harvest will never cease”—he has put forth his hand, and taken hold upon that which God has reserved for himself, the only creature made to glorify God by the faculties of a deathless soul; *that creature* man has seized, has torn the crown from his brow, has robbed him of his dignity, and stamped him as a beast. Ay, advertises him for sale with oxen and horses, and lashes him with a scourge to the shambles where he is to be sold! And yet there are those in America, who ask whether slavery is not a *religious* and *divine* institution. And for what is man enslaved? What great purpose is accom-

plished by this robbery of God—this sacrilege of man—this wreck of soul—this annihilation of intellect—this wringing of the heart-strings of humanity—this degradation of the loftiest being in the world to the lowest condition of which a tamed brute is capable? Is there some grand object of stupendous magnitude, which cannot be accomplished unless this be done, and which makes it *expedient*, if not *right*, that one portion of the human race should be sacrificed, that the rest might be saved? It is, that a few may be *idle* themselves, and yet sell rice, tobacco, sugar, and cotton. And it is asked: Is slavery religious? No man need ask whether slavery be *irreligious*. Can that be religious which dethrones *God* and puts *man* in his place? Can that be religious which strikes at the root, at once of the *freedom, responsibility, dignity, and happiness* of man? Can that be religious which makes one man the *tyrant*, and another a *slave*, and creates a gulf between them, wide as that between the burning seraph near the throne of *God*, and the reptile that lives upon the vapor of a dungeon? Ask not whether it can be *religious*; for your own heart tells you it is not *human*. You shoot without remorse the wild beast that comes into your fold and steals the lambs of your flock. Slavery waits till the agony of the mother is over, to plunder her of the fruit of her womb, and to write beast upon that brow which was intended to wear the stamp of intelligence, and the crown of immortality!

How appalling is the state of America, when viewed in connection with the prostration of *politics, literature, commerce, social intercourse, and religion*, before the spirit of slavery! To the many who look through forms, ceremonies, professions, and creeds, to the actual, pervading spirit of a nation, America seems to have no actuating principle but slavery, no God but slavery. At the South, the soil is monopolized by it. It overshadows millions of acres of the fairest portions of *God's* creation. Every portion of the population is under its direct and absolute influence. The patrician class are the slaveholders. Their wealth is computed in slaves. Their influence regulated by the number of their slaves. Their respectability measured by

the number of slaves. The slaves themselves are nothing *beside* slaves. Their muscular power—their mechanic skill—their powers of endurance—their spiritual intelligence—their personal beauty—their fecundity, as being capable of multiplying their species—all weighed, tested, and appraised, in connection with slavery. The *free* people of color, as they are called in mockery, are regarded as below contempt. Having no *marketable* value, they are nuisances, eye-sores, and abominations—the very filth and offscouring of the body politic, to be got rid of as soon as means can be devised, to gather them up as the scum of humanity, to be thrown off the surface of society. The non-slaveholding whites in the South are a race of mongrels, who *exist*, not *live*: who are tolerated, not encouraged; and who have no *status* or position among their own kind. What the state of morals in such a community must be, it needs no statistics nor newspaper facts to prove. We know, however, from the records of every day, as well as from the deductions of reason, the condition of the South in regard to morals. We know that, superadded to the vices of the free States, there are crimes and immoralities peculiar to the region of slavery. We know that human lusts are without a check or restraint. We know that all that is precious to one of the sexes, is the sport of those who live to gratify their passions. We know that *marriage*, as an indissoluble tie, as a legal contract, as protected by law, as giving the husband the right to defend the wife, is utterly unknown amongst the three millions of the South. We know that a bear in the forest has a better chance of rearing unmolested her whelps, and of keeping them when she has reared them, than the human mother who suckles slaves. We know that symmetry and beauty are the curses of their owners, and mark them out for infamy and perdition. We know that Religion is made to coalesce with this state of things; that the ministers of religion are slaveholders, slave-breeders, graziers in human cattle, slave-whippers; and the friends, co-partners, and co-plunderers with the vilest of the vile of the intelligent creation. We know, that *humanity* is a *crime*; the love of equal freedom the unpardonable sin; and that the priesthood consent

to the martyrdom of the emancipationist, and will hold the clothes of those who stone him. How much better is it at the North? The religion of the North recognizes the religion of the South. I have printed letters in my possession, written by slaveholding ministers, since I came to America, boasting of the fraternal greeting everywhere given them in the free States—of the pulpits thrown open to them—of the sacraments administered by them, and reporting the state of the religious mind as *sound* and *healthy* on the subject of slavery. What a fearful revelation has the late Fugitive Slave Law led to. It might have been sent to prove to the world the deeply corrupt state of the Northern American Churches. Christendom may well stand aghast at the doctrines which have been preached by the descendants of the Puritans, since that Bill became the law of the United States. Take the entire range of Northern literature of every class: 1. The penny papers that cater to the appetites of the multitude. 2. The papers that are the organs of trade and commerce. 3. The papers that support political parties. 4. The papers that are the representatives of religious denominations. 5. The periodical literature, in the shape of magazines, reviews, and miscellanies. Either they stoutly defend slavery, meanly apologise for slavery, or are profoundly silent on the subject. An American cannot name the influential periodical journal that writes in favor of *humanity*, and directly and unequivocally condemns slavery. I have now referred to that description of literature which is carefully provided for the known moral and intellectual palates of the people. Are you not justified in inferring the state of the public mind from these indications? Take graver works. Works on moral philosophy. Reprints of English Works. Works on American history. Works on political economy. All contain the proofs, positive or negative, of the fact that the spirit of slavery reigns in the department of literature, as supremely as in the cotton or rice fields of Alabama or Carolina. These are startling and affecting signs of the times.

Look again at the tameness, the submissiveness, the almost thankfulness, with which the North allows herself to be de-

prived of her rights, and her citizens going South to be treated worse than curs. She allows the crews of her vessels to be plundered of their citizen rights, and thrust into dungeons, and sold to pay their jail fees. She allows her own diplomatic ministers to be ordered out of a Southern State by a Lynch Committee. She allows her best sons to have their backs ploughed up, their heads shaved, their bodies tarred and feathered; to be hunted, mobbed, ducked, drowned, imprisoned, cat-hauled, branded, shot like dogs, and never utters a word of remonstrance. What is the only subject which will now raise a mob? Abolition. What is the worst character a man can bear in the church? The character of being an abolitionist. What is the opinion a man takes the most pains to conceal? The opinion that slavery is a curse and a disgrace to the country. What class of men, of all others, is it that may be ridiculed and libelled with impunity—in the pulpit, in public lectures, in lyceums, at dinners, on political platforms? Abolitionists. What meetings are they to which rowdies and little boys know they may go, to shuffle, whistle, crow, and cough with impunity? The meetings of abolitionists. What religious views are termed heresies? Those that view *man* as *man*, whatever be his color or his country. What slave is it, of all the slaves in the world, that an American may not succor? The slave born in his own country, and, perchance, the son of one of its most distinguished patriots. What animal is it that a Southerner may hunt over all the valleys, hills, and plains of the free States? MAN! The American GAME LAWS grant licenses to hunt this animal throughout the land, and make it a crime, nay, *treason*, to attempt to succor, defend, or rescue the prey of the blood-scenters of the South, when on the track of the flying and quivering fugitive. No American will deny, that I have drawn a true picture of the state of his country.

No American will deny, that the pro-slavery sentiment is the paramount sentiment of the United States. Slavery in America is superior to all law, for it is the controlling spirit of the country. There is no higher code than the bloody enactments of slavery. The great religious controversy at this moment in

the United States is upon the question, whether there is any higher law than the Fugitive Slave Law; and the majority—the vast majority of the Divines, go for the superior authority of the Congress, and preach openly to their congregations, that thus saith Millard Fillmore, is more binding than thus saith the Lord; and that a letter signed Daniel Webster, is infinitely more worthy of attention, than the Sermon on the Mount. If any thing more than another can prove the horrid influence and dominion of slavery in the United States, it is the fact, that, because the demon hates the Bible, the Christian denominations of that country have consented to withhold it from the three millions of Southern slaves. Yet, if any portion of the human race need the Bible, heaven knows it is the slaves. This has always appeared to me the fact which, above all others, proved the demoralizing influence and atheistical character of slavery, that men, who profess to regard the Bible as the Word of God, and the revelation of his will to the children of men, should deliberately consent to see it withheld from their fellow-immortal beings, and enter no protest against laws which punish the second offence of teaching the Bible, with the penalty of death. Christians of Toronto, of all sects! I summon you to-night to the rescue of pure and undefiled religion, from the dishonor cast upon it by slavery in the United States of America. If a nation is to be judged by its fruits, and according to the prevailing influence which directs, controls, and domineers in every department—in the field—on the exchange—in the closet of the author—the study of the minister—the Assembly of the Presbyterian—the Conference of the Methodist—the Hall of Legislation—the Cabinet of the General Government—I ask you, who is the God of America? Is this the God who hath “made of one blood all nations of men to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the bounds of their habitation;” the God who is “no respecter of persons,” who directed Philip to join himself to the Ethiopian eunuch; who hath said, “Cry aloud, spare not;” the God who spake from the burning bush—who sent his Son to seek and save the lost—whose tender mercies are over all his works? Is this the God who is

served in America? I see a consistency between the religion and the acts of the devil-worshippers of interior Africa. The medicine mummeries of the North American Indian correspond with the habits and pursuits of these children of the wilderness. I can understand the Persic fire-worshippers, when he bows before the sacred flame, or hails the sun as he comes forth from the chambers of the east. I can understand the Mohamedan, the warrior of the faith, who goes forth with the sword in one hand, and the Keran in the other, to spread the religion of the Prophet. I can understand the Hindoo, when he washes in the Ganges, or prostrates himself under the wheels of Jugger-naut; but I cannot understand the religion of America, and least of all, reconcile it, as it is seen in the lives of its professors, with that religion of love, whose object, aim, spirit, duties, blessings, hopes, rewards, honors, and glories are LIBERTY! whose founder came to preach deliverance to the captive, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound. Wherever I travel in America, I am still in the realms of slavery. The country is magnificent and glorious—the mountains are stupendous and sublime—the rivers roll their floods along in majesty and beauty—their valleys stretch away in verdure and loveliness; there are towering steeples, and multitudinous priests, and busy crowds hastening to worship, and a never-ending, still beginning round of rites, ceremonies, and observances; there are loud and ostentatious proclamations of the duties and obligations of religion, and thanksgivings, and feasts, and festivals; but all these hide not from the sight the presence of the foul demon of slavery; his spirit is everywhere—his dominion universal—his will despotic. The glorious external creation seems but the vestibule of his glorious temple, and all the rites and ceremonies of the people seem to be subordinate to the profound and soul-prostrating homage paid to this insatiate fiend, who has seated himself above all that is called God, and daily demands the living death of three millions of the human race. Amidst all the temples of America, I see another, and entering its dreary portals, and penetrating to the chamber where sits this God of America, I behold him amid all the symbols of

pollution and wo, with his heel upon the manacled form of American Liberty, surrounded by crushed hearts, darkened souls, deflowered maidens, weeping Rachael's, and lustful tyrants—issuing his mandates for the enslavement of a continent—swaying a sceptre of scorpions over his quivering victims—a sceptre of iron over his voluntary, self-degraded vassals, and with demonical exultation exclaiming: See how these Christians love one another! And this is the system that has to be abolished. Oh, this anti-slavery cause is a cause of surpassing greatness. There is nothing little about it but its advocates. If we would swell beyond the dwarfish dimensions of our own narrow souls—our own petty prejudices—let us gaze often and long upon the fabric we are seeking to extirpate. There is real grandeur in the gloomy vastness of the huge superstructure of guilt we are seeking to abolish. Try to measure its circumference, and you will fail. Let down the line into the horrible abyss, and you shall bring it up again, exclaiming: “O, the depths!” Try to count the groans, and agonies, and sighs, pressed by this system into every instant of time, and arithmetic shall fail you. Try to penetrate the future, and to grasp the issues of this system, and your imagination, halting and weary, shall give up in despair. Try to compute the value of one of the millions of souls daily imbruted by this system, put it into the scale against the material universe, and it shall make the vast magnificence of unintelligent creation to kick the beam. Then try to compute the value of the slaves, past, present, and to come. Take up this work as one of mere humanity, of mercy to animals. Oh, it is far higher and holier than this. Christianity must be exhumed from the sepulchre, and you must roll away the stone. The Genius of Liberty must be disenthralled, and you must break her bonds. Mind, immortal, illimitable mind, waits to be let into liberty and life. The Bible, in chains, cries: Emancipate me, and let me go free. The earth calls: Deliver me from my curse. Labor cries: I am degraded, dishonored, infamous; redeem me, and let me be again the glory of him who tills the soil! Morality says: Behold me; I am wounded, violated, struck down; let me once

again stand erect to teach man his duties, and be the guardian of human rights! The negro says: Have pity upon me, and transform me from a beast into a man. Have pity on that woman, my concubine, whom I may not make my wife. Behold my empty table plundered of its contents, my daughter polluted and ruined!

Let us turn to the bright side of the picture. If there is slavery in the United States, there is also antislavery. If there are those who prostitute their talents and influence to the support of slavery, there are those also who devote themselves, time, talents, property, health, reputation, and all, to the cause of the slave. If there are those who pass fugitive slave bills, there are those who execrate those bills, and hold them to be atrocious violations, under the name of law, of every precept, divine and human, pointing to the duties which man owes to his fellow-man. The anti-slavery cause is advancing with majestic strides. Its aspect is truly sublime. When I was formerly in the United States, the abolitionists were few, and therefore despised; now, their name is Legion. Now they speak, and the Legislature listens. Now they issue their command, and it is obeyed. Twenty years of unceasing effort has made this the question of questions. In the anti-slavery ranks is to be found intellect as lofty as any to be found in the ranks of slavery, and an amount of moral courage and indomitable zeal and perseverance never excelled in the prosecution of any other enterprise, not excepting those of an exclusively religious character. In this conflict, the abolitionists ask and have a right to expect the sympathy and aid of the entire civilized world; and the man who is not willing to give them that which they ask, is no friend to liberty. I have been told, since I came to this city, that there are those in it who inquire, What have we to do in this matter? If any such persons are here, I would say, Everything. Are we separated geographically and politically from the country where slavery reigns? We are, for that very reason, the persons best able to form an unbiassed and sound judgment on the question at issue. We have as much to do with this question as with any question

that concerns the happiness of man, the glory of God, or the hopes and destinies of the human race. We have to do with this question, for it lies at the foundation of your own rights as a portion of the human family. The cause of liberty is one all over the world. What have you to do with this question? The slave is your brother, and you cannot dissolve that union. While he remains God's child, he will remain your brother. He is helpless, and you are free and powerful; and if you neglect him, you are not doing as you would have others do to you, if you were in bonds. Know you not that it is God's method to save man by man, and that man is only great and honorable and blest himself, as he is the friend and defender of those who need his aid? You are dwellers on a continent with three millions of slaves. Their sighs come to you with every breeze from the South. Oh, haste to help them, that this glorious continent may be freed from its pollution and its curse. Give the fugitive your aid. You have thus far done nobly. Continue to receive kindly and to cherish hospitably, on these shores, the refugees from the house of American bondage. Give the abolitionists your sympathy. Let them hear, in tones louder than those of Niagara, your words of encouragement—your hearty God-speed. It will refresh and re-animate them in their work, and cause them to gird up their loins and renew the struggle. The influence I ask you to exert is moral influence, and against that there can be no legitimate objection, as there can be no effectual resistance. Let your weapons be those of truth, reason and religion, and the time shall come when, from sea to sea, and from the Arctic regions to Panama, this soil shall be sacred to freedom.

Mr. Thompson was frequently interrupted by enthusiastic bursts of applause, and sat down amidst continued cheering.

After a few remarks from Frederick Douglass, the Rev. Dr. Burns closed the meeting with prayer.